

## Message Text

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ACTION EURE-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
TRSE-00 HA-05 /072 W  
-----084861 190547Z /10

R 161301Z NOV 79  
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2859  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY LISBON  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE  
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG  
USDOCSOUTH NAPLES IT  
USMISSION USNATO  
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER  
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN GER  
AMCONSUL BARCELONA POUCH  
AMCONSUL BILBAO POUCH  
AMCONSUL SEVILLE POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 MADRID 16258

BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC; USCINCEUR FOR POLAD; USDOCOSOUTH  
FOR INTAF; CINCUSAFE FOR POLAD

E.O. 12065: GDS 11/13/85  
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, SP  
SUBJECT : SITUATION IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

1. CONFIDENTIAL ENTIRE TEXT.

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2. POL COUNSELOR MADE A FAMILIARIZATION TRIP TO THE  
BASQUE COUNTRY NOVEMBER 5-7, CALLING ON GOVERNMENT  
OFFICIALS, POLITICAL LEADERS, AND OTHERS. THIS  
MESSAGE SUMMARIZES HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE SITUATION  
THERE TWO WEEKS AFTER THE REFERENDUM WHICH APPROVED  
THE REGIONAL AUTONOMY STATUTES.

3. AIR OF CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM: GOVERNMENT AND BASQUE NATIONALIST PARTY (PNV) LEADERS WERE CLEARLY BOTH RELIEVED AND PLEASED AT THE OUTCOME OF THE REFERENDUM. THERE WAS NEVER ANY DOUBT IN THEIR MINDS THAT THE STATUTES WOULD BE APPROVED, AND THAT THE VOTER TURNOUT WOULD MAKE AT LEAST DEFENSIBLE THE CLAIM THAT THE FAVORABLE VOTE CONSTITUTED THE WILL OF THE BASQUE PEOPLE. HOWEVER THE NEARLY SIXTY PERCENT TURNOUT CONSIDERABLY EXCEEDED THEIR SOBEREST EXPECTATIONS, AND THE FACT THAT THE VOTE IN FAVOR OF THE STATUTE EXCEEDED FIFTY PERCENT OF ALL REGISTERED VOTERS, NOT JUST THOSE GOING TO THE POLLS, EVEN IN THOSE AREAS WHERE HERRI BATASUNA IS THE STRONGEST, IS BEING REGARDED AS A CLEAR MANDATE FOR THE PNV AND FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY. THERE WAS ALSO SOME AMUSED SATISFACTION THAT THE STATUTES DID BETTER IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY THAN THEY DID IN CATALUNA, THOUGH LEADERS WERE QUICK TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE SITUATIONS IN THE TWO REGIONS WERE QUITE DIFFERENT. BOTH SIDES ARE PLAYING COMPLICATED STATISTICAL GAMES TO SERVE THEIR OWN PURPOSES, BUT THERE IS GENERAL IF NOT ALWAYS STATED AGREEMENT THAT THE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ABSTENTION IN THE RECENT ELECTION WAS PROBABLY NO MORE THAN THREE PERCENT.

4. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE VOTE ITSELF IN CREATING THE AIR OF QUIET OPTIMISM NOW TO BE FOUND IN THE BASQUE CONFIDENTIAL

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COUNTRY WAS THE PUBLIC REACTION TO THE SLAYING TWO DAYS AFTER THE REFERENDUM OF SOCIALIST LABOR LEADER. THE TWENTY-FOUR HOUR GENERAL STRIKE, WHICH IS REGARDED AS HAVING BEEN SIXTY TO SIXTY-FIVE PERCENT EFFECTIVE, AND THE MASSIVE TURNOUT FOR THE FUNERAL OF THE VICTIM WERE UNPRECEDENTED IN RECENT BASQUE HISTORY. CLEARLY THE POLITICAL PARTIES, ESPECIALLY THE PNV AND THE SOCIALISTS, ORCHESTRATED THIS REACTION AND DID THEIR BEST TO REINFORCE IT, BUT THEIR EFFORTS MET A GENUINELY RESPONSIVE CHORD IN THE PUBLIC, WHICH IS INCREASINGLY FED UP WITH CEASELESS VIOLENCE. A SIMILAR, THOUGH SMALLER, DEMONSTRATION TOOK PLACE SEVERAL DAYS LATER AT THE FUNERAL OF A POLICEMAN WHO HAD BEEN KILLED BY ETA. THE PNV WAS CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT THIS TIME, BUT A CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC AND POLITICAL TURNOUT TO HONOR A MURDERED POLICEMAN IS ALSO REGARDED AS UNPRECEDENTED. BOTH THE RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM AND THE REACTION TO THE TWO SLAYINGS SHORTLY AFTER CAME AS A CONSIDERABLE SHOCK TO HERRI BATASUNA, AND THERE IS REPORTEDLY AN INTERNAL DEBATE GOING ON AS TO HERRI BATASUNA'S AND EVEN ETA'S FUTURE STRATEGY.

5. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: THE PNV IS PUSHING FOR  
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, PERHAPS  
BY THE END OF JANUARY, IN ORDER TO BUILD ON THE  
MOMFNTUM OF FHE REFERENDUM AND ALSO TO TAKE MAXIMUM  
ADVANTAGE OF THE FAVORABLE IMAGE THE PARTY NOW  
ENJOYS AS A RESULT OF THAT SUCCESS. THE GOVERNMENT

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
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BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC; USCINCEUR FOR POLAD; USDOCOSOUTH  
FOR INTAF; CINCUSAFE FOR POLAD

PREFERS A MORE MEASURED PACE AND IS SHOOTING AT  
MARCH OR EVEN APRIL FOR THE ELECTIONS. THE STATUTES  
HAVE TILL TO UNDERGO THE FORMALITY OF APPROVAL BY  
THE PARLIAEMENT, SIGNATURE BY BHE KING, AND

PUBLICATION IN THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE. THE ELECTIONS  
MUST THEN BE HELD WITHIN SIXTY DAYS OF PUBLICATION,  
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BUT THIS PROCESS LENDS ITSELF TO BRING SPEEDED  
UP OR SLOWED DOWN TO SUIT THE PREFERENCES OF THE  
GOVERNMENT. REPORTEDLY THE GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN  
IS NOT THE PROBABLE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS  
IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY, WHERE ITS INTERESTS  
REALLY COINCIDE WITH THOSE OF THE PNV, BUT WHAT  
IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN IN CATALUNA. THERE IS NO  
NECESSARY REASON WHY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SHOULD  
BE HELD THTE SAME DAY IN THE TWO REGIONS, BUT  
THERE IS A CERTAIN LOGIC TO IT SINCE THE  
REFERENDUMS SERE HELD SIMULTANEOUSLY, AND AT A  
MINIMUM THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS  
AS TO WHY IT CHOSE DIFFERENT DATES FOR THE TWO  
ELECTIONS IF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ARE NOT ALSO  
SIMULTNANEOUS. POSTPONING ELECTIONS AS LONG AS  
POSSIBLE GIVES THE GOVERNMENT MAXIMUM TIME TO GET  
THINGS ORGANIZED IN CATALUNYA, WHERE HE  
PROBABLE OUTCOME IN THE ABSENCE OF ENERGETIC  
SPADEWORK IS A STRONGLY LEFTIST GOVERNMENT,  
PERHAPS A SOCIALIST/COMMUNIST COALITION.

6. HERRI BATASUNA HAS NOT YET DECIDED ITS FUTURE  
STRATEGY, BUT MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT IT IS  
LIKELY TO PRESENT CANDIDATES IN THE PARLIAMENTARY  
ELECTIONS, AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO WIN SIX OR SEVEN  
SEATS IN THE NEW BASQUE PARLIAMENT (ABOUT TEN  
PERCENT). PRESENTING CANDIDATES IN THE ELECTION  
WOULD NOT BE A RADICAL DEPARTURE FOR HERRI BATASUNA,  
WHICH HAS A RECORD OF ACCOMMODATING ITSELF TO  
CIRCUMSTANCES IN A WAY THAT IS PRAGMATIC IF NOT  
DOWN RIGHT CYNICAL, BUT SUCH A DECISION WOULD INDICATE  
ITS BELIEF THAT AN IMPORTANT CHANGE HAD IN FACT  
TAKEN PLACE IN THE BASQUE REGION REQUIRING THAT  
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IT REVISE ITS OWN TACTICS.

7. BUILDING A GOVERNMENT: THERE IS A GENERAL  
REALIZATION THAT THE PROCESS OF TRANSFERRING POWERS  
FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND BUILDING A NEW  
BASQUE GOVERNMENT WILL BE A LONG, DRAWN OUT ONE.  
EVEN IF MADRID WANTS TO MOVE QUICKLY, THERE ARE BOTH

CONSTITUTIONAL AND PRACTICAL LIMITS ON THE  
DEGREE TO WHICH THE PROCESS CAN BE ACCELERATED.  
ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS A STRONGLY FELT NEED  
IN BOTH OFFICIAL AND POLITICAL CIRCLES FOR THE  
GOVERNMENT TO MAKE SOME KIND OF GESTURE WHICH WOULD  
DEMONSTRATE ITS SINCERITY AND SERIOUSNESS OF  
PURPOSE. OBVIOUSLY NOT MUCH IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN  
BEFORE THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, BUT SOME  
SYMBOLIC STEP, PARTICULARLY IN THE POLICE AND  
SECURITY AREA, WOULD CLEARLY BE WELCOME, AND  
COULD HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON THE ELECTIONS  
THEMSELVES BY DEMONSTRATING THAT THEIR INITIATIVES  
WERE BEARING FRUIT.

8. SEVERAL PNV LEADERS SAID THAT THE PNV WOULD HAVE  
TO LEAN HEAVILY ON THE UCD FOR ADVICE AND SUPPORT DURING  
THE EARLY DAYS OF THE NEW BASQUE GOVERNMENT, AND  
NOTED THE BASIC AFFINITY BETWEEN THE UCD AND THE BULK  
OF THE PNV. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES  
WOULD HAVE TO BE DISCREET, THEY NOTED, BUT  
IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO THE EXPERIMENT THAT WAS  
ABOUT TO BEGIN. PNV LEADERS INDICATED APPRECIATION  
FOR THE EFFORTS OF THE PSOE IN GETTING OUT THE  
VOTE IN THE REFERENDUM, AND FOR CONFRONTING ETA  
AFTERWARDS, BUT SEVERAL FELT DEEP SUSPICION OF THE  
PSOE'S MOTIVES AND SAID THAT WHEN ALL WAS SAID AND  
DONE THE PNV AND PSOE WERE NATURAL ANTAGONISTS RATHER  
THAN ALLIES.

9. TERRORISM: HOW THE ETA (M AND PM) TERRORISTS  
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ICA-11 TRSE-00 /072 W  
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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2861  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
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BRUSSELS ALSO FUR USEEC; USCINCEUR FOR POLAD; USDOCOSOUTH  
FOR INTAF; CINCUSAFE FOR POLAD

REACT TO THE CHANGING SITUATION IS THE MOST  
IMPORTANT OUTSTANDING QUESTION. FEW BELIEVE THERE  
WILL BE ANY SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN THE SHORT RUN,  
THOUGH THERE IS SOME SATISFACTION THAT THERE WERE  
NO SPECTACULARS ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTION, AS  
MANY HAD EXPECTED, AND THAT TERRORIST ACTIVITY  
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SINCE HASN'T REALLY REACHED LEVELS OF "BUSINESS AS  
USUAL." THE CIVIL GOVERNOR OF VIZCAYA, FERNANDO  
JIMENEZ LOPEZ, SAID HE FELT ETA QUIESCENCE  
BEFORE THE REFERENDUM WAS DUE TO A PACT WITH THE PNV,  
AND THAT ETA HADN'T YET FIGURED OUT HOW TO REACT  
TO THE NEW SITUATION. HE AND OTHERS SAID THEY  
BELIEVED THAT PNV AND ETA LEADERS WERE IN FAIRLY  
CONSTANT COMMUNICATION, AND THAT IN THE LONG RUN  
THE SOLUTION LAY IN NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE NEW  
PNV GOVERNMENT AND THE ETA RATHER THAN IN THE NEW  
GOVERNMENT TURNING ON THE ETA AND DESTROYING IT,  
THOUGH IT COULD DO THIS TOO IF IT HAD TO. ONE  
SOURCE INDICATED THE ALLEGED MOVEMENT OF A CONSIDERABLE  
CHUNK OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE ETA TO  
VENEZUELA BEFORE THE ELECTION REFLECTED A REALIZATION  
THAT THE ENVIRONMENT IN BOTH SPAIN AND FRANCE  
WOULD NOT BE AS FAVORABLE AS IN THE PAST.

10. TORTURE AND THE POLICE: THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE CHARGES THAT SEVERAL YOUTHS SUSPECTED OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY HAD BEEN TORTURED WHILE IN POLICE CUSTODY IN SAN SEBASTIAN ERUPTED DURING THE VISIT. REGARDLESS OF THE TRUTH OR FALSITY OF THESE CHARGES (WHICH WERE DENIED BY THE GOVERNMENT, SAYING THAT THE BRUISES AND WOUNDS THE YOUTHS HAD SUFFERED HAD PROBABLY BEEN SELF-INFLICTED) IT WAS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND ANYONE IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY WHO DOUBTED THAT THE CHARGES WERE TRUE. AN EXCEPTION WAS THE CIVIL GOVERNOR OF GUIZPUCOA, JOAQUIN ARGOTE ALARCON, WHO EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM AT THE TORTURE CHARGES, AND A CERTAIN LACK OF SYMPATHY AND CONCERN EVEN IF THEY WERE TRUE.

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11. HOW THE GOVERNMENT IN MADRID AND THE NEW REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN THE NORTH HANDLE THE TERRORISM/SECURITY EQUATION IS LIKELY TO BE THE LITMUS TEST OF THE DEVOLUTION STRATEGY. CLEARLY MADRID HAS NO INTENTION OF DUMPING THE TERRORISM PROBLEM IN THE LAP OF A NEW REGIONAL GOVERNMENT WHILE IT IS IN THE PROCESS OF TRYING TO ORGANIZE ITSELF AND RAISE AND TRAIN INDIGENOUS FORCES OF PUBLIC ORDER. NOR CAN IT BACK OFF IN THE FACE OF WHAT MAY YET BE A NEW CAMPAIGN OF TERRORISM BY ETA AND ITS ASSOCIATED ORGANS. YET HEAVY-HANDED EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN ORDER AND PROTECT THE NEW GOVERNMENT COULD SUBSTANTIATE CLAIMS BY ETA THAT THE LEOPARD HAD NOT CHANGED ITS SPOTS, AND THAT THE NEW PNV GOVERNMENT WAS SIMPLY A STOOGE FOR MADRID. SOLVING THIS EQUATION IN A MANNER THAT DOES NOT JEOPARDIZE GAINS THUS FAR IS GOING TO TAKE STATESMANSHIP OF A HIGH ORDER ON THE PART OF BOTH CENTRAL AND BASQUE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS.

12. THE ECONOMIC SITUATION: THE OTHER OBSTACLE IS THE ECONOMIC SITUATION, WHICH EVERYONE SEES AS THE MAJOR LONG TERM CHALLENGE THE NEW BASQUE GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO HAVE TO FACE. IT IS WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE RECESSION WHICH HAS SEVERLY AFFECTED THE BASQUE COUNTRY IN RECENT YEARS IS ONLY A PART OF THE MALAISE AFFECTING THE ECONOMIES OF SPAIN, EUROPE, AND INDEED THE WHOLE WESTERN WORLD. HOWEVER, IT IS FELT THAT THE TERRORISM PROBLEM HAS BY ITSELF MADE A SUBSTANTIAL QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE NORTH. NOT ONLY HAS THERE BEEN NO NEW INVESTMENT, EITHER LOCAL OR FROM ABROAD, BUT THERE HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIAL DISINVESTMENT AS LEADING FAMILIES, SQUEEZED BY "REVOLUTIONARY TAXES" OR FRIGHTENED BY THREATS, HAVE SHIFTED RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE REGION, OR ACTUALLY FLED. AT BEST PLANT AND EQUIPMENT HAVE BEEN ALLOWED

TO RUN DOWN, AND NO PROVISION HAS BEEN MADE FOR  
THEIR REPLACEMENT. THERE IS NO EXPECTATION THAT THE  
GRADUAL SHIFT IN THE POLITICAL CLIMATE WILL  
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BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC; USINCEUR FOR POLAD; USDOCOSOUTH  
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IMMEDIATELY BE REFLECTED IN IMPROVED ECONOMIC  
PERFORMANCE, BUT THE MUTED OPTIMISM PREVADING THE



POLITICAL SCENE IS EXTENDING TO THE ECONOMIC PICTURE AS WELL. IT IS NOT GOING TO BE EASY FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO MEET THESE EXPECTATIONS, BUT TO THE DEGREE THEY ARE DISAPPOINTED AND REPLACED BY CYNICISM  
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AND BITTERNESS THE WHOLE DEVOLUTION PROCESS COULD BE THROWN OUT OF GEAR.

13. THE MASSIVE LEMONIZ NUCLEAR COMPLEX IS A SORT OF HOSTAGE THE FUTURE OF WHICH COULD BECOME WORRISOME. THE NUCLEAR AND GENERATING UNIT IS BEING BUILT BY WESTINGHOUSE WHILE BECHTEL IS PUTTING UP THE REST OF THE PLANT. ETA HAS SAID THAT THE PLANT MAY BE BUILT, BUT THEY WILL NEVER ALLOW IT TO FUNCTION. THE PLANT IS WIDELY UNPOPULAR FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS EVEN THOUGH IT EMPLOYS SEVERAL THOUSAND WORKERS, AND IT ALREADY IS A POLITICAL ISSUE. A PNV LEADER TOLD THE REPORTING OFFICER THAT HE THOROUGHLY EXPECTED THE TWO ISSUES HERRI BATASUNA WOULD CONCENTRATE ON IN THE FORTHCOMING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WOULD BE THE ECONOMY AND NUCLEAR POWER, PARTICULARLY THE LEMONIZ PLANT. HE SAID THAT, UNFORTUNATELY, THE PNV WOULD HAVE TO BE AMBIGUOUS AT BEST ON THE NUCLEAR ISSUE AND THE LEMONIZ PLANT, WHICH WOULD GIVE HERRI BATASUNA WHAT WOULD AMOUNT TO A FREE RUN. THE PROSPECTS FOR THE LEMONIZ COMPLEX ARE NOT ENCOURAGING UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

14. COMMENT: SINCE THE VISIT DESCRIBED ABOVE A NEW WAVE OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY HAS BROKEN OUT IN THE NORTH AND A LEADING UCD POLITICIAN, JAVIER RUPEREZ, HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED IN MADRID. THESE DEVELOPMENTS MAY DAMPEN THE MOOD OF CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM FOUND IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY LAST WEEK. HOWEVER THE NATURE OF THE VIOLENCE, WHICH INCLUDED THE KILLING OF A HERRI BATASUNA CITY COUNCILMAN BY POLICE AT A ROADBLOCK, AND THE MACHINE-GUN SLAYING OF TWO POLICEMEN, UNDERLINES THE CRITICAL NATURE OF THE TERRORISM/SECURITY EQUATION AS THE DEVOLUTION  
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PROCESS UNFOLDS. ANOTHER INCIDENT, THE BOMBING OF A PLANT IN SANTANDER BUILDING GENERATING EQUIPMENT FOR THE LEMONIZ NUCLEAR COMPLEX, UNDERLINES THE DANGER TO THAT PROJECT. BARBOUR

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